

Todd Brunner

Old Friends Executed Recently - Volume 2

1. Olivia (1997)
2. Somebody (2002)
3. Mystic (1995)
4. Twice a Day, Every Day (2002)
5. Beehive (1996)
6. Depraved (2002)
7. The Beaten Man (1999)
8. Size is Everything (1997)
9. The Red Beret (1984)
10. Old Hotel (2002)

This is the second and final volume of the "Old Friends" series, wherein I undertake to record old songs of mine that have never before been recorded. For full background on the series please refer to the booklet from Volume 1. If you haven't already got that record and don't want to shell out more money, the booklet can be downloaded (free) from the Volume 1 page at sublamental.com (as can this one from its page). Rather than reiterate that story here I will instead concentrate on the stories of the individual songs themselves. I hope you enjoy this album!

Todd Brunner
Lushwood Hills
April 2023

Olivia

(1997, *Burwash, East Sussex*)

This song was a live staple of both of my bands, The Nitz and Uncle Twylite. It's a fictional account of a very naughty girl who pays the ultimate price for her sins at the end of the song. While not based on any one person, Olivia is a composite of several people I've known, not all of them female. It's kind of unlike anything else I was writing at the time, or have written since. It's a melancholy, sad story with a miserable ending. You're welcome!



Olivia was a common crook
She learned to do it from a book
Got a special thrill from what she took
And it made her kinda wild
To great excess she liked to drink
She'd pour it down 'til she couldn't think
And then spread it wide the colour pink
For anyone around

<chorus>

Olivia strange but sweet
Complicated frank and indiscreet
Yeah she could drain your vessel dry
And do it in her sleep
She stole it all and wanted more
Like a tiger's gotta eat
So tell me now what were we to do
For Olivia
</chorus>

Olivia she took it far
Cuttin' deals in the boss's car
Sneaking sweets from behind the bar
She was greatly out of hand
Arrested for a petty theft
She didn't know her right from left



Of her senses she was sure bereft
So they threw her in the can

<chorus>

Olivia she bumped her head
Hit the ground like a sack of lead
Rolled over once and then lay down dead
She was better off that way

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Somebody

(2002, Tunbridge Wells, Kent)

This song was actually in the process of being recorded for my abandoned album, *Anti-gravity*, but it didn't get very far before I packed up and quit music for six years.

Certainly my most straightforward pop song of this particular period, it presents an uncharacteristic positivity in its simple message: Don't be boring, you don't have to be. I remember singing this song for hoards of drunken people at my friend Jim's house in southern Spain on several occasions. Good times!



You are many, just the same
As all the others in this game
But don't you figure that you could fly
With all the birdies up in the sky
So what's it gonna be

You could
Be somebody who you know you are
Be somebody in the singular
Be somebody in a higher state
You could be somebody now

That sounds painful you might say
And all the shit won't go away
But you can shovel like I do
With motivation for cleaner shoes
So what's it gonna be

You could
Be somebody in a crowded room
Be somebody with a nom de plume
Be somebody in a special way
You could be somebody now

You can do it, just like that
You'll pull a rabbit from a hat
Then you can sing and dance along
To rapturous verses of this here song
So what's it gonna be

You can
Be somebody – just let it go
Be somebody who you wanna know
Be somebody – yeah you know it's right
You can be somebody now

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Mystic

(1995, Burwash, East Sussex)

This song was originally a vocal number with a full set of lyrics. I wrote it for my friend Petra to sing and we rehearsed it once or twice. Then life-shit happened, I forgot about the song and lost the lyrics somehow over the years.

Recently though, I located a rough recording of me playing the song without lyrics and thus was able to recall all of the music. There was no hope of restoring the lyrics. The only line I remembered was, "I'm feeling mystic like a witch inside", and I didn't even remember what the song was about. So it appears here as an instrumental for much the same reason as "This Train" did on Volume 1.



Twice a Day, Every Day

(2002, Tunbridge Wells, Kent)

This cute little ditty was also an after-dinner favourite at Jim's house in Spain, where the crowd of (sometimes up to 30 people) would sing the brass parts along with me. Of course they weren't yet brass parts, just melodies out in the wilderness. The lyrics were inspired by someone telling me that they had sex twice a day, every day, which I found both hysterically funny and hard to swallow for a couple in their mid 40s. The absurdity of it still makes me smile, and yet it was, in fact, true! One of my best songs of the period if I do say so myself. Short, sweet and to the point.



I like pleasure and I like pain
That's the balance that I maintain
I serve the body but not the brain
Twice a day every day

I'm so shallow but I don't care
Life is evil and so unfair
I play my hand almost anywhere
Twice a day every day

I got symptoms I can't deny
They might break me or let me fly
Just hit that target right in the eye
Twice a day every day

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Beehive

(1996, *Burwash, East Sussex*)

A somewhat autobiographical piece about leaving the big city for a quieter life, and questioning the things you once thought important. Again a live staple of both The Nitz and Uncle Twylite, particularly the latter where we were known to "play the fuck out of it", according to an enthusiastic audience member. The middle-8 was not in the original version. I added this at the suggestion of Silas Tupper when we were recording the basic tracks, to add a bit of drama.



I was born in a beehive
In a honeycomb town
Where the fruit of the labour
Is world renown

Had a fanciful childhood
With a headful of dreams
And a long education
In the beehive regime

<chorus>

And I thought all of the world was what
we made it to be
Taking honeycomb architects so seriously
Sorry I got it wrong.
Castles toppled and gone
Buzz busy bee
</chorus>

So I took on the mission
With the rest of the bees
For a piece of the action
And a social disease

We were drunk with the prospect
Yeah, the nectar was sweet
Just one sip of a flower
And life was complete



<chorus>

Then I flew from the beehive
To make honey elsewhere
And it all looked so different
From up in the air

Now I carry the mantle
And the tools of my trade
For the sake of the honey
Not the beehive crusade

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Depraved

(2002, Tunbridge Wells, Kent)

I think when I wrote this I was in the midst of an unrequited infatuation situation, so the words are an outpouring of hormonally-driven anger. It wasn't real anger, just frustration and middle-aged angst. There is nothing quite like an unsuccessful love-life to trigger song inspiration! Generally I have steered clear of writing songs about relationships for the past two decades, as I feel that every possible thing has already been said a thousandfold, and these kind of lyrics are just boring to me. This song is about as close as I get. Also see "In Your Face" from my *Walter Under the Bridge* album.



You think things are right when they're correct

Always black and white as you expect

And I must be depraved for thinking that

I must be a nasty fuck

To rain right down on your parade

So sue me

I know what you say aint what you mean

Being here and there and in between

And I must be depraved for saying that

I must be a wicked shit

To kick you down into a ditch

So sue me

Take or leave it

Just believe it

You know that it's true

Love or hate me

Second rate me

But I will get you

Stuff that floats around inside your head

Just the libraries that you have read

And I must be depraved for thinking that I must be some perverse git

To break your world and stamp on it

So sue me

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The Beaten Man

(1999, *Burwash, East Sussex*)

An esoteric song about defeat. I don't know what I was thinking here but I liked the sound of the words. This and "Naturally" from Volume 1 are of a similar ilk lyrically. We played this in the very last incarnation of Uncle Twylite, probably at around double this speed. Always one of my favourite songs, which was, frankly, underserved by a power trio (although we did our best). This arrangement is more along the lines of what I heard in my head when I wrote it. It's been a long time coming.



He was gifted in the abstract
Nothing you could gamble on
Planetary in his aspect
Incandescent
Unaware
Universally everywhere
Yeah he was stuck before he began
So you might call him the beaten man
The beaten man

Cursed with facets never-ending
More by far than he could use
Nine-dimensionally distant
Visionary
Resolute
An occupational institute
But he was buggered before he ran
So you might call him the beaten man
The beaten man

<chorus>
Let's go wild
Scream like a child
Raise a cup for the beaten man
Lost and found
Down on the ground
Give it up for the beaten man

Celebrate
He's too late
Hate the guts of the beaten man
From the door
To the floor
Kick the nuts of the beaten man
</chorus>

Tossed and tangled by the wayside
He was flotsam in the soup
Unpunished but unforgiven
Fatalistic
Justified
Undeniably mystified
Yeah he was naked without a plan
So you might call him the beaten man
The beaten man

<chorus>

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Size is Everything

(1997, Burwash, East Sussex)

Around 1996-97 I read two books on viruses and became fascinated and a little scared by Earth's tiniest parasitic lifeforms. The books very clearly pointed out that a global pandemic was not only possible, but highly likely, and that it was only luck that had prevented such a thing so far. In 2020 the world learned the truth of this first-hand, but back in '97 my friends found me humourously amusing when I would rant about how a deadly and highly contagious virus like Ebola could decimate the entire human race in a very short time, should it ever get out. This is still true, by the way. If it had been Ebola or Marburg instead of Covid-19 most of us would be dead now. Anyway, I decided to write this (vague) song about the subject. Just a little warning to 1997 Earth that our precious little stronghold here is tenuous. A shame really that no one ever heard the song.

Laying in the street
Reproducing in the heat
Waits the mother of disease
Oh yeah
She don't need no car
To get to where you are
Got a method, got a plan
Oh yeah

<chorus>

Size is everything
When describing stuff that's very small
A microscopic string
Becoming pathological
When it's inside of you
Better worry 'bout the tiny things
And what they're gonna do
It's a small, small world
</chorus>

Drifting through the air
Of the space that we all share
Lurks the father of the bride
Oh yeah
He will marry you
To his rich genetic stew
Got a method, got a plan
Oh yeah

<chorus>

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The Red Beret

(1984, Malibu, California)

This piece was written on a Yamaha MK 100 PortaSound portable keyboard. This was a small device with a tiny four-octave keyboard, a couple of tiny speakers, a small selection of cheesy electronic sounds, and a bank of preset rhythms like "Samba" and "Bossa Nova". This may have been the first piece I ever composed on the unit, I can't actually remember. (I also did a version of "The Lonely Bull" by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass.) The song was just an experiment really, a test drive, so to speak. I never intended to arrange and record it properly. But when I uncovered a rough cassette recording of the original PortaSound piece recently, I thought it had potential. If only to have a song in 3/4 on the album, which, if you are familiar with my work, I tend to do. ("Beehive" is in 6/8 which is pretty much the same thing, so actually there are two. Yay me!)



Old Hotel

(2002, Tunbridge Wells, Kent)

This was written partly about a pub/hotel nearby where I lived at the time. On Friday and Saturday nights they had live music, and one evening I popped in to check out what band was playing and there was no one in the entire pub except the band and the bartender. The band was miserably playing away to no one. To be fair, they weren't very good, so I ducked out quickly. Another time I was there at closing time after busy night, and a friend and I were the last people there standing at the bar finishing our drinks. I looked across the empty pub and the visible smoke in the air was so thick you could hardly breathe. This is back when smoking was allowed everywhere in Britain. On a sofa behind where the band had played was a large dog fast asleep, oblivious to all. So I wove this imagery in with some other more critical thoughts on humanity to make this song.

Guess I'm gonna go down to that old hotel
Sit a while if I can stand the smell
Buy myself a drinkie
Kill a little time

Conversations in that old hotel
All around and I can hear them well
Everyone's complaining
Life's so fucking hard

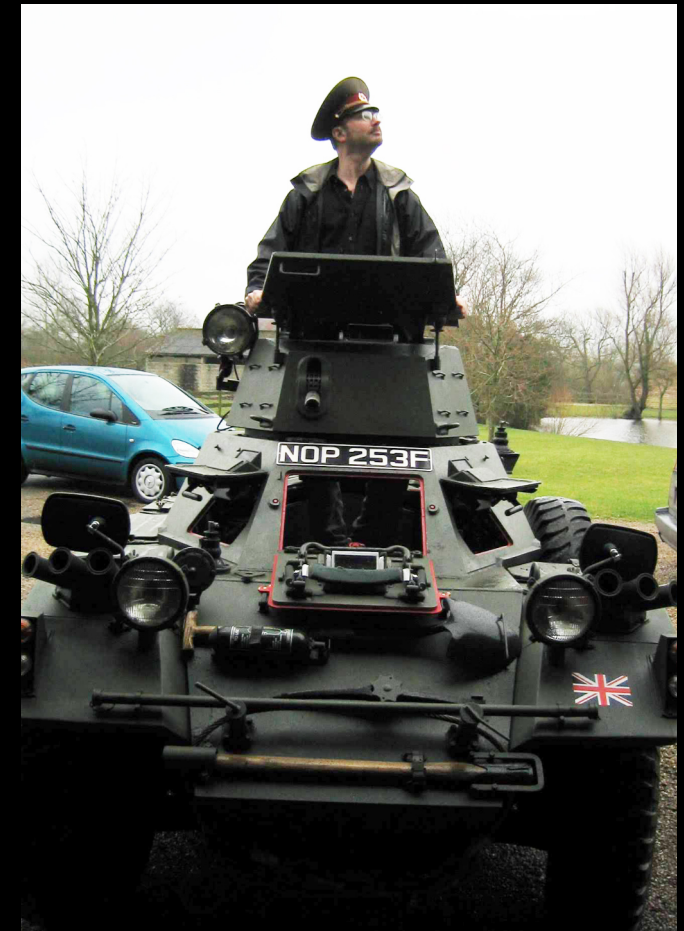
Human gallery
Comic misery
Or it seems that way to me
Work's crap
Home is tough
No one gets enough
The best things in life are always free

New horizons at this old hotel
A sleeping dog in a smoky hell
A band is playing somewhere
Somewhere all alone

Bad gastronomy
Divine symmetry
Maybe we get what we deserve
Food in stomachs out
What's that all about

It beats the daylights out of me
I'll make an exit from this old hotel
I might return yeah you just can't tell
But if I'm being honest
I probably never will

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Todd Brunner - vocals, guitar, synths, samples, mellotron

Tony Roko - organ, guitar, vibraphone

Catriona Flamenghi - bass, piano

Silas Tupper - drums, percussion

Rebecca Flamenghi - trombone

Marlon Cavendish - trumpet

Pearl Barley - saxophones

The Shimmering Lungfish Orchestra - strings

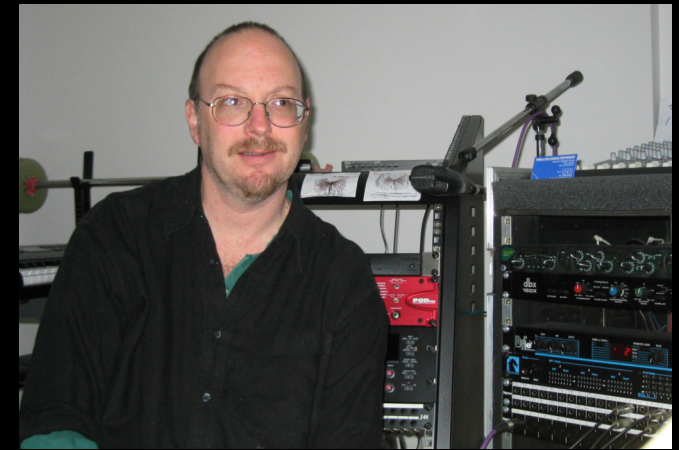
Written and Produced by **Todd Brunner**

Proudly made in Lushwood Hills. Basic tracks recorded February 2022 at Fir Tree. Overdubs recorded January - March 2023 at The Enclave.

Thanks to all of the members of Cyanide Slugs for helping me finish this almost four-year project. Thanks to all of the people who were in my life when these songs were written, and to those who make my life worth living now. And special love to Stathis and David for always being my brothers.

Cover and booklet design by Atticus Grafficas. Cover photo by Gordon C. Scabplaster.

This album is dedicated to Jacob Cairns. At times you heard some of these songs. Rest in peace, dude.



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